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STUDIES IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL - SOME CONTEMPORARY TRENDS

J.McPOLIN

"To labour in the field of Johannine studies and to work through the plethora of accompanying literature is certainly...a humbling and exacting experience". /1/ The never slackening output of literature on the Fourth Gospel testifies to the accuracy of this observation. The pace, depth and variety of contemporary scholarship in this area are evident even from a cursory glance at the mass of recent works which either list or assess the contemporary writings on the Gospel. /2/

Twenty years ago C.K.Barrett revised W.F.Howard's "The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation". In 1957 scholars spoke about the "new look in the Fourth Gospel" and again in 1974 they spoke of another "new look" in Johannine studies, because in the 1960's and 70's there had been an explosion of studies in the Fourth Gospel. In particular, 1963-73 /3/ mark a stage when important contributions were made towards an advanced understanding of the gospel.

WRITTEN AND UNWRITTEN WORKS

Study of the Fourth Gospel has been progressing at all levels and the variety in approach can be seen from surprising titles like: "Realised Eschatology: A Study of St John - New Insights into the Fourth Gospel". /5/ J.S. Henning makes a good point when he writes: "Gestalt Therapy emphasises the here and now, the awareness of present experience and behaviour...John insisted that judgment was a present reality, the existential moment of decision that every man must make regarding the acceptance or rejection of the light...'He who hears my word and believes in him who sent me, possesses eternal life'. Jesus is resurrection and life here and now.... John was not a Gestalt therapist...His realised eschatology is a development from and a contrast to the ideology of his time. It offers a reflection of current trends towards understanding man's emptiness".

Alongside the supremely scientific approach, which is

providing advanced knowledge of the gospel, of its problems and background, some new pastoral approaches have also been provided. For example, some scholars have published works intended to help those who wish to direct various forms of prayer experiences based on the gospel.⁶ Recent studies in the Fourth Gospel must also include unwritten works! The Church of Ireland Notes in the Irish Times, Nov. 10th, 1976, recorded that "the Ballymascanlon working party on 'Church, Scripture and Authority' recommended that all the churches in Ireland should get together in an intensive study of St John's Gospel on an inter-Church basis, and the working party has in fact issued a syllabus for such study which is now in the hands of every clergyman of the Church of Ireland". Thus an inter-Church study of the Fourth Gospel is a basis for christian unity today. In the area of liturgy there are the popular songs of the monks of Weston Priory, America who sing unamended texts straight from the gospel, e.g. "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit..." (Jn. 3:5) and "If a man loves me, he will keep my word..." (Jn. 14:23)

I A DECADE OF PROGRESS: 1963-73

a) The Composition and Sources of the Gospel

R. Kysar has pinpointed the main preoccupations of Fourth Gospel studies between 1963 and 1973⁷. First, attention has focused on identifying the sources and traditions the evangelist uses and on the process of development in the formation of the gospel. Many have engaged in source analysis and redaction criticism and have put forward theories about various stages in the composition of the gospel. But this enterprise of identifying and isolating the sources and traditions behind the gospel has run into special problems, since this gospel is so different from the Synoptics which may be compared with one another in their respective uses of sources and traditions. The view now prevails that the fourth evangelist does not depend on one or more of the Synoptics nor do they constitute his sources. The question is asked: how can we distinguish with reasonable clarity between the contribution of the evangelist and the traditions or sources on which he draws?

Despite the lack of those conditions which would

render source criticism a fairly foolproof technique when applied to the Fourth Gospel, scholars during this period have come up with various kinds of source proposals. The bases for such proposals, for distinguishing between the editorial work of the evangelist and his sources are a certain unevenness and inconsistency in the gospel text, some sudden breaks in thought sequences, hard connections and unnecessary repetitions. These, it is claimed, reveal traces of editorial work, perhaps even of various editors, on traditions and pre-existing sources. Careful analysis can uncover patchwork or editorial "seams".

Already in 1941 R. Bultmann had argued for various sources (e.g. a "signs" source, discourse-source, passion-resurrection-source and some other miscellaneous sources)⁸ but his theory gradually lost ground before the counter-offensive of those scholars who concluded on the basis of style analysis that there was no evidence to support a distinction between sources and redaction in the text⁹. In the early seventies, however, the hypothesis of a "signs"-source behind the gospel has gained prominence chiefly through the works of R.T. Fortna¹⁰, W. Nicol¹¹, and H. Teeple¹². Basing their theories on stylistic or ideological i.e. theological differences or on unevenness and discontinuities in the text, they isolate, identify and reconstruct at least a written "signs"-source (miracle stories) which the evangelist used.

In addition to source hypotheses, there have been proposals (sometimes older theories are restated) about stages in the evolution of the gospel and about its relation to the Synoptics. A five-stage development of the gospel, put forward by R.E. Brown in his two-volume commentary and accepted as plausible by many,¹³ maintains that (i) there was first a body of traditional material about the works and words of Jesus which (ii) was then shaped during oral transmission and was the work of a 'school' rather than an individual. John, the Son of Zebedee (the Beloved Disciple) was the principal figure in this tradition but a disciple of John played an increasingly important role in this second stage. (iii) In the third stage this disciple organiz-

ed and wrote down this oral tradition in the form of a consecutive gospel. (iv) The fourth stage consists in a second edition (manifest in texts such as 9:22-23) by the same disciple and (v) finally there was a redaction of the document by a friend or pupil of the evangelist (e.g. ch. 21, the prologue, much of the Farewell Discourse along with chs. 11-12 were added). This theory is founded on stylistic variations, breaks and incongruities in the narrative and on the repetitious quality of some passages.

W. Wilckens /14/ proposes a three-stage development: there was a basic "signs" gospel, the work of a "Beloved Disciple" to which was added discourse material and the final editing of the gospel rearranged the existing materials and added more with paschal motifs. Similarly, B. Lindars /15/ proposes various phases: first of all there were unrelated traditions, short collections. Then traditional materials (sayings and narratives) were woven into homilies. Subsequently the first form of the gospel was written and later revised to strengthen faith in a situation of persecution (to include the prologue and chs. 6, 11, 15-17) and finally, there were some post-johannine traditions.

Redaction criticism, which had proved to be an effective technique for understanding the particular contribution of each Synoptic, was also applied to the Fourth Gospel in order to discover how the evangelist shaped and imposed himself on the sources he used and how he was influenced in his editorial work by external circumstances e.g. the community situation. Despite the great difficulties in applying redaction criticism to the Fourth Gospel, some writers claim that certain editorial contributions are evident in the gospel's Christology, soteriology and theology of miracle faith (cf. Jn. 4:48; 7:13). Some of the external influences from within the johannine community suggested as imposing themselves on the editor are: /16/ the struggle with gnostic docetism, the conflict situation between the Jews and christians along with some questions pressed on the community by Jewish opponents, e.g. Who is Jesus? Can one follow Moses and Jesus both? What significance has Jesus' death?

More certain and substantial progress has been made in the question concerning the relationship of the Fourth Gospel to the Synoptics. The movement, mainly initiated by P.Gardner-Smith, /17/ to rebut the theory of John's literary dependence on any one of the Synoptic gospels, gained momentum. On the other hand, contacts were examined and established between the Synoptics and John /18/ on the basis of cross influences between the synoptic and johannine traditions at their pre-literary stage.

Outstanding among several works of quality in this field are those of C.H. Dodd /19/ and A. Dauer. /20/ Dodd scrutinizes the various passages which reveal points of contact in the pre-literary traditions and concludes from these that "John is not dependent on the Synoptic gospels but is transmitting independently a special form of the common oral tradition" /21/. In comparing John's passion account with that of the Synoptics, A. Dauer judges that John does not depend on the written accounts of the Synoptics but in many areas he uses traditions which also influenced the Synoptics. He also recognizes the possibility that synoptic influences may have come to the fourth evangelist in written form though his chief contention is that they reached the johannine tradition while it was still oral. Generally, whereas in the late sixties there was more emphasis on the dissimilarities between John and the Synoptics, in the early seventies scholars became more interested in the similarities and the points of contact in the traditions behind them.

b) The Milieu of the Fourth Gospel

Another focus of scholarship during this period is the identity of the evangelist and the milieu and concrete historical situation which shaped the gospel. The complexities of authorship are reflected in the diverse opinions: (i) John, the Son of Zebedee, is directly responsible or (ii) indirectly responsible as the originator of the tradition (i.e. another put it in the form of the present gospel). (iii) John Mark is indirectly responsible as the originator of the tradition embedded in the gospel or (iv) an anonymous author is responsible for the present gospel and the source of

his tradition is equally unknown.

The second and fourth solutions won more acceptance and it is significant that since 1974 some leading Roman Catholic scholars have changed their allegiance. For example, R. Schnackenburg in the first volume of his commentary favoured the second opinion (1966) but in his third volume he adopts the fourth one (1976) /22/. Similarly, R. Brown in his most recent work /23/ has changed his view: "I am inclined to change my mind.. from the position that I took in the first volume of my Anchor Bible Commentary identifying the Beloved Disciple as one of the Twelve viz. John, Son of Zebedee. I insisted there on the combination of external evidence which made this the strongest hypothesis. I now recognize that the external and internal evidence are probably not to be harmonized..Second-century information about the origins of the gospels (often reflecting scholarly guesses of that period) has not held up well in modern scholarship..There is a set tendency in the second-century information to oversimplify the directness of the connection between the evangelists and the eyewitness". According to this view, which is gaining more and more support, the Beloved Disciple, whose authority lies behind the gospel, cannot be identified with John the Apostle.

Limitless energy has been expended on the intellectual and religious milieu of the gospel. In the fifties Dodd won much support with his stress on hellenistic influence in the shape of a syncretism of Platonic and Stoic philosophy. Later there was a widespread shift towards a Jewish Palestinian background when the stone thrown by an Arab shepherd at Qumran created a clatter which generated loud echoes even in johannine scholarship. In the first rapture of discovery some probably overstated Qumran influence but a publication of essays "John and Qumran" (ed. J.H.Charlesworth) in 1972 /24/ shows a more calm and sober assessment of the evidence.

In addition, scholarship, particularly in Germany, focused sharply on the relationship between gnosticism and the gospel. Back in 1925 and 1941 /25/ Bultmann claimed that gnostic sources such as Mandaean literature strongly influenced the gospel. However, A.M.Hunter

writes in 1968 that "the Mandaean fever may now be said to have spent itself" /26/. But this was not altogether true if one seriously reckons with research in Germany and to a lesser degree in America which linked the gospel not only with Mandaean and Manichean gnostic sources but also with some gnostic documents discovered in Nag Hammadi in Egypt (1945-46), particularly with the Gospel of Truth. /27/.

Gradually there was a shift from the simple option in the quest for the religious and intellectual milieu of the gospel: hellenism or Judaism or gnosticism. A more rounded and complex consensus was taking shape: the gospel would have been intended for a milieu influenced by Jewish, hellenistic and syncretistic elements. /28/.

More wholehearted attempts were made in this decade than previously to re-create the concrete community situation which influenced the evangelist. The range of views is considerable but the main trends in this research have been: the gospel was directed to a community of christian believers during a state of conflict with the synagogue (Martyn) /29/; it presents an anti-docetic polemic (Dunn, Richter) /30/; some, with varying emphases, have pointed to the influence of Samaritan beliefs in the shaping of the gospel even to the extent that it has a Samaritan setting or origin (Buchanan, Freed, Meeks) /31/; others emphasise that the gospel has a universal appeal to a widely dispersed and heterogeneous audience of christian believers. /32/

c) The Theology of the Fourth Gospel

Perhaps the most interesting studies on the Fourth Gospel during this period are those which research in greater depth the richness of John's theological thought and certain themes, particularly in the following areas: Christology, eschatology, witness, signs, faith, the Holy-Spirit-Paraclete, the sacraments and ecclesiology. The theme of the Christ of history and the johannine Christ of faith has been the subject of various but inconclusive discussions. /33/ E. Käsemann, stressing the glory and transcendent aspect of Jesus, maintains that the central viewpoint of the gospel, namely, the unity of the Son with his Father, inclines towards a docetic Christology. /34/

Similarly, S. Schulz /35/ minimizes the gospel's interest in the humanity of Jesus.

A more intermediate and significant approach highlights for the first time John's theology of mission, with emphasis on the mission of the Incarnate Jesus to the world. /36/ This mission theology insists on the reality of the flesh, on Jesus' earthly mission as well as the reality of glory in the person of Jesus sent in time to the world by the Father. S. Sabugal examines the use of the title "Christ" in the gospel and epistles of John and concludes that it underlines the "horizontal" aspect of Jesus' mission ("Son of God" points to his transcendence). /37/ F.M. Braun continues the trend to integrate both aspects of John's Christology in "an indivisible Christ" /38/ while A. Feuillet stresses the trinitarian dimension and its relationship to his theology of divine love. /39/ Others distinguish between function and person in johannine Christology. /40/

The "I am" sayings, so central to this Christology, had been the subject of special attention, especially since the work of E. Schweizer /41/, but more recent works, particularly that of P. Harner /42/ have shed added light on their meaning and Old Testament background. In this context, too, the thorough monographs of R. Borig /43/ and A.J. Simonis /43/ are to be singled out. Johannine eschatology had also been a storm centre of scholarship particularly since Bultmann proposed that the evangelist maintains a realized eschatology and that a futuristic eschatology was an addition of an ecclesiastical redactor /44/. A more balanced and thorough analysis of johannine eschatology by J. Blank /45/ and P. Ricca /46/ has shown that both aspects are compatible for the evangelist, and that eschatology in the gospel is very Christ-centred. Besides, they have clarified the meaning of "judgment" in the gospel as a self-imposed consequence of a personal decision in response to revelation. Numerous writings have researched the theme of faith in the gospel and have underscored its Christological orientation and its relationship to "seeing" and "knowing" and to other themes such as "signs" and "witness" /47/ The background, meaning and vocabulary of these two themes, "witness" and "signs" have also received extensive treat-

ment. /48/

Contemporary interest in the life of the Spirit is reflected also in the number and quality of writings which examine the background of the concept Spirit-Paraclete, the mission of the Spirit, and his relationship to Christ and his role as Spirit of truth. The Old Testament, Jewish forensic thought, Jewish angelology as reflected in Qumran and gnosticism have all been suggested as the background of John's pneumatology. /49/ There is a general tendency to describe the function of the Spirit-Paraclete as twofold: he interprets the revelation of Christ to the disciple; he provides for the personal appropriation of this revelation of Christ. /50/

"No specifically ecclesiological interest can be detected" /51/ - this challenging claim of Bultmann about the gospel was one factor which aroused scholars to probe further the ecclesiology of John. Some have emphasised the opposition between Church and the "world" /52/ or have seen an ecclesial motif behind the themes of mission (of the disciples) and unity in the gospel. /53/ Chapters 10 and 15, according to P. Le Fort, /54/ portray the Church as a community of faith resisting false doctrine and Church order and ecclesial emphases are reflected particularly in ch. 21. /55/ H. van den Bussche shows that the chief interest of the Fourth Gospel is Christology and that it is not a treatise on the Church yet for the evangelist the idea of Church is deeply rooted in the gospel, for example in concepts such as "children of God", in the theology of the word received in faith by the community of believers, in the stress on the break with Judaism, in the universal mission of the community, in images such as the vine and the shepherd and, finally, in the references to sacraments. /56/

As regards the sacraments, there has been a letup in the controversy represented by two extreme positions, namely between those who see a minimal sacramental interest (e.g. Bultmann /57/) and those who see numerous references in the gospel to sacraments (e.g. Cullmann /58/) with the result that a more balanced viewpoint has emerged. /59/ Criteria for detecting references, direct or indirect, to sacraments have been proposed:

sacramental implications of John's symbols have to be drawn from the text of John, from his own explanations, from the whole gospel or New Testament context, even from Old Testament references and images. Besides, John's centre of attention is never the sacraments themselves or the cultic life of the community but the mission and self-revelation of Jesus on earth. John's vision of Jesus' work extends beyond his death and resurrection. All the activity of the johannine Christ takes place in the awareness that his mission on earth, his self-revelation and his communication of life are only fulfilled through his return to the Father, through the sending of the Spirit and, within the life of the Church, through the word and sacramental action of Jesus. The possibility is commonly recognised that some sacramental sections in John (3:5;6:51-58) are editorial additions at a later stage of the composition of the gospel.

d) Structures and Style

Studies on the literary techniques and structures of the gospel have contributed to a more precise understanding of the text, despite the scepticism or silence of some modern scholars about their value. "In the Fourth Gospel theology and aesthetics are mutually complementary", says C.H. Talbert in an article /60/ which presents the dramatic development of the gospel in terms of structure. Besides, an analysis of structures and literary devices (e.g. announcement of a theme, connecting words, repetition of key words and phrases, parallelisms, the various ways a dialogue or discourse develops) illustrates how the gospel forms an organic whole and such analysis often holds the key to the interpretation of a word or phrase. For example, numerous writings /61/ on various sections of the gospel, e.g. on chs 3,6,17 and in particular on the prologue show the value of this type of analysis. Due to lack of space it is not possible to deal with the extensive body of literature on the prologue, its structure and its relationship to the rest of the gospel. A striking article of A. Feuillet /62/ proposes and develops the similarity of structure between the gospel and First

Letter of John and D.W. Wead renders a valuable service by assembling and explaining many literary devices found in the gospel. /63/

e) Accomplishments of a Decade

This decade also saw the publication of many commentaries in different languages, the most complete and extensive among these being the two volumes of R. Brown (1965, 1970) /64/ and the three volumes of R. Schnackenburg (1965, 1971, 1976) /65/. These cover all areas of scholarship concerning the gospel and they are mutually complementary since Schnackenburg's work (his third volume is less diffuse and is a work of outstanding merit) places more emphasis on literary criticism, on the analysis of sources and various "strata" in the text.

The main advances of this period have been in the study of the literary, historical and theological aspects of the gospel. Studies have clarified that behind the gospel there was a body of traditional material. The gospel is a collection of narrative and discourse which have been brought together over a number of stages and periods. Thus the composition of this gospel was a process involving a number of persons and historical situations; it is also a work of a community of faith because its contents are the result in large part of the conditions of a community of persons. However, it remains unclear how these traditional materials reached the evangelist, a creative redactor. A degree of consensus has not been reached as regards what is traditional and what is redactional in the gospel.

Scholarship has also strengthened the case for a very pervasive Jewish milieu which, however, was also penetrated by hellenistic and other syncretistic influences so that "the fourth evangelist was a child of a multiformed, syncretistic Judaism" /66/. Whether these influences include gnostic elements remains unclear in spite of great efforts from some scholars to push gnosticism. Impressive studies also demonstrated that tension between the synagogue and christian communities is an integral part of the gospel's setting and that the gospel as a whole must be read as a document strengthening and nurturing faith within this framework of the

Jewish-Christian struggle. Also research gradually moved away from any sort of effort to link the evangelist with the apostle, John.

Studies in the theology and themes of the gospel pointed to three main conclusions: the Christological concentration of the gospel; the interrelatedness of themes in the gospel, that is, the study of one theme is linked with others and especially with the Christology of the gospel. Thirdly, when one compares the Fourth Gospel with the Synoptics it becomes ever clearer how distinctive is Johannine Christianity and theology and how different it is from other forms of Christianity known to us through other New Testament literature.

II PROGRESS SINCE 1974

Recent scholarship has followed up previous efforts in the four areas outlined in the first part of this article. Probably the most notable achievement has been a more concentrated study of individual themes, areas or texts of the gospel. This survey, like the previous section, is selective and therefore the works explicitly mentioned are chosen in order to illustrate the general directions of contemporary Fourth Gospel studies, for they are a mere cross-section of the never slackening output of literature on the gospel.

a) The Composition and Sources of the Gospel

Despite the inherent difficulties of the enterprise, the value of source criticism of the gospel has been acknowledged by many and a consensus seems to be developing among scholars that the evangelist used sources, especially a narrative source which includes "signs" (miracle stories). /67/ However, the task of delineating these sources remain tentative in spite of the particularly thorough effort by M.E. Boismard who also attempts to reconstruct four literary stages of composition /68/. S. Temple seeks to identify the "core" of the Fourth Gospel - a narrative-discourse source on the basis of which the gospel was composed; but neither his arguments nor his method are convincing. /69/

Redaction criticism is still exploring the relationship between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics and con-

firms the dependence of both John and the Synoptics on common sources or traditions. /70/ The focus remains on the similarities and points of contact between John and the Synoptics. C.K. Barrett, for example, claims that John and Mark are close together not merely in the passion account but elsewhere, too: the sequence of the feeding of the multitude and the walking on the water is common to both. In Mark there are stories which John repeats, sometimes, at least, in substantially the same order, sometimes with similar or identical words. /70/ Barrett has touched on an area which merits further research.

b) The Milieu of the Fourth Gospel

While writers acknowledge the importance of the Beloved Disciple in the life of the community for which the gospel is written, they have become less inclined to identify him with John, the apostle or with the evangelist. /72/

There is also a strong tendency to emphasise the Jewish background, in particular by pointing to the influence of the Old Testament, even of the targumim on the gospel, since the author would have been formed in the liturgy of the synagogue. /73/ Besides, ecumenism has brought into the limelight the question of the evangelist's attitude to the Jews: is the gospel anti-semitic? /74/

More important is the trend to investigate more thoroughly the Church life of the community for which the gospel was written. J.L. Martyn distinguishes three stages in the history of the johannine community which are reflected in the gospel, /75/ while G. Richter traces within the gospel theological views of four different communities /76/ and W. Langbrandtner indicates three community stages: the first phase was influenced by a gnostic, dualistic outlook and this 'Grundschrift' (basic document) was reinterpreted in an anti-gnostic, anti-docetic way with emphasis on the fleshly existence and bodily resurrection of Jesus, on ethics, sacraments and future eschatology. The epistles reflect a further stage in the life of the community. /77/

R. Brown assesses these positions and puts forward

his own view while at the same time he is aware of the perils and hypothetical nature of reconstructing the life situation of the community for which the gospel was written. But such a task is not impossible since the gospels tell us primarily about the Church situation in which they were written and, therefore, through some "detective work", especially by literary analysis, one can gain an insight into the life of the community at the time when the gospel was composed. Even though this reconstruction work has snags and lacks adequate sources outside the gospel and epistles of John, Brown by means of a cautious and rigorous methodology, adduces evidence for four phases. The first is the pre-gospel era, the time of controversies between johannine christians and the synagogue leaders when some gentiles had already joined the community. Various groupings and Christologies were emerging (c. 50-80 A.D.). The second phase is that of the life situation of the johannine community at the time the gospel was written (c. 90 A.D.), when persecution continues and when the relationship of the community to outsiders, whether non-believers (the "world", Jews) or other christian groups (whose faith in Jesus is inadequate e.g. followers of John the Baptist) becomes prominent. The third phase involves the life situation in the now divided johannine communities at the time the epistles were written (c. 100 A.D.). There is a struggle between two groups who are interpreting the gospel in opposite ways, both as regards Christology, ethics, eschatology and pneumatology. Both parties know the proclamation of christianity available through the Fourth Gospel but they interpreted it differently. Phase four saw dissolution of the two johannine groups after the epistles were written. "The secessionists, no longer in communion with the more conservative side of the johannine community, probably moved rapidly in the second century toward docetism, gnosticism, Cerinthianism and Montanism". /78/

c) The Theology of the Fourth Gospel

In the area of johannine theology some new avenues in Christology and ecclesiology continue to be explored. For example, examining the development of Christology in the gospel in the light of source criticism, R.T. Fortna

maintains that John aims at refuting the charge of dith-eism (i.e. two Gods, the Father and Son) and that he heightens some docetic elements in his presentation of Jesus. /79/ Christology continues to be viewed in terms of mission and the aspect of Jesus' mission underlined by M. Veloso is its origin and Jesus' relationship to the Father in mission. /80/ One of the most important contributions to the Christology of the gospel is the first full-scale monograph on the use of the title "Son of Man" in the gospel by F.J. Moloney. His main point is: whereas the title "Son (of God)" speaks of the basis of Jesus' existence and purpose before, during and after the Incarnation, the title "Son of Man" for John is entirely dependent on the Incarnation: Jesus, the Son of Man, is God's revelation among men, bringing judgment in his presence in history. All the Son of Man sayings point ultimately to the cross. /81/

The controversy as to whether the Church is present or absent in the gospel has been surveyed and somewhat defused by the balanced view that, while the gospel is basically Christological and truly individualistic in that it emphasises the need for the individual believer to respond in faith to Christ, there are also signs of the Church in the gospel. /82/ A further step in bringing together divergent positions about the sacramental theology of John is made by B. Lindars who highlights the link in the gospel between faith and sacrament (baptism) and between word and sacrament. /83/

Contemporary scholarship has also proven how a comprehensive monograph on some single area of johannine theology can at times be more penetrating and more valuable for understanding John than any commentary, however voluminous. Such works also show that each theme in the gospel is linked with all other themes. To take two outstanding examples: firstly the two volumes of I. de la Potterie on the theme of truth in the gospel and epistles of John combines linguistic and structural analysis, exceptional familiarity with the language of John along with precise interpretation of texts and their background. He proposes that the background of "truth" in John is to be found in Qumran texts, in later apocalyptic and wisdom literature in which it is related to mystery, revelation and the revealing word. /84/

Secondly, F. Porsch has contributed the most satisfactory work to date on the Holy Spirit-Paraclete in the gospel since he provides not only a thorough examination of the relevant texts and their background but he also deals in masterly fashion with some of the problems that have been raised over the years about John's pneumatology: has the gospel a unified theology of the Spirit? Is the Paraclete for John identical with the Christ who returns and is present in the community? When Jesus gives the Spirit to disciples (20:21) is this event the fulfilment of the Paraclete promises? Porsch demonstrates that John's pneumatology is first and foremost Christological and he clarifies the relationship in the gospel between word, sacrament and the Holy Spirit. /85/

Other monographs have made further inroads into some johannine themes. The theme of oneness or unity (between Father and Son, between Jesus and disciples), according to M. Appold, reflects the content and direction of the whole gospel. The oneness motif is a pivotal point of John's Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology while the centre and cause of unity of disciples with Jesus and with one another is the oneness of Father and Son. /86/

Furthermore, a problem area of johannine theology, the connection between soteriology and revelation, is tackled by J.T. Forestell. /87/ According to Bultmann /88/ Jesus is first and foremost a revealer and the death of Jesus has no objective, saving meaning. Th. Müller, /89/ taking up the cudgels against Bultmann, insists that in the gospel Jesus' death is an integral part of his mission as saviour and revealer and that his death is viewed by John as an expiatory and vicarious sacrifice for sin. Forestell steers a course between these opposites: the theme of revelation dominates and yet the death of Jesus is a distinct, integral and essential part of his revelatory and saving work. But Forestell's efforts to minimize or explain as peripheral any victim motif (e.g. Jn. 6: 51; 1: 29, 36; 1 Jn. 1:7, 9 etc.) need further refinement. A more feasible explanation could be that John combines a variety of perspectives among which one must also include that of the cross as removing sin, even if this is not as dominant as the revelatory aspect of Jesus' death.

Some other lacunae have been filled by more concentrated studies on Jesus' relation to the law and on the adoptive sonship of christians. S. Pancaro demonstrates effectively how the relationship between Jesus and the law is a basic question in the gospel /90/ and M. Vellanickal's work is the most thorough-going treatment of the divine sonship of christians, also an important theme in the johannine writings. /91/ A monograph on the use of onoma (name) with reference to the Father and Son in the gospel shows how the name of the Father and the name of the Son express aspects of the revelation of the Father through the Son and the unity of Father and Son. This "name" concept of John, the background of which is investigated with reference to the Old Testament, the Gospel of Truth and the Odes of Solomon, is theologically unique. /92/ Finally, some other themes treated comprehensively in monographs are: the "hour" /93/ and the will of God and the will of man /94/.

Very specialized scholarship has focused, too, on particular words of verses and a particularly fine example of this precision work is A. Vanhoye's article on a crux interpretum, Jn. 2:4. /95/ Recently the case for the singular reading of the verb rather than the plural (in Jn. 1:13) ("who was born not out of human stock..." cf. Jerusalem Bible) has been espoused by some scholars. /96/

d) Structures and Style

Scholarship continues to show how structural and literary techniques are a key to gospel interpretation. In particular B. Olsson /97/ demonstrates this by emphasising the semantic structure of the text, its linguistic and literary character and also the connection between the structure and the message. /98/

CONCLUSION

In the past five years certain theological themes of the gospel have been explored more successfully and many have come to recognise source-criticism and redaction criticism as valid methods of study even with regard to this gospel. More thorough-going efforts have been made to identify the community for which the

gospel was written and the intellectual and religious milieu out of which it was born.

Still, certain areas beckon scholars to probe further. For example, source criticism presents difficulties since writers vary so much in their conclusions about the number and type of sources. The task still remains to reach some greater degree of consensus between what is traditional and what is redactional in the gospel. In addition, during the past decade or more, scholarship, particularly in Germany, has focused on gnosis as a possible element in the background of the gospel. It has not yet been clearly shown whether such preoccupation with gnosis has been worthwhile. However, the suggested background of an eclectic Jewish milieu with hellenistic and syncretistic influences needs to be further determined. Besides, in spite of recent concentration on the nature of the johannine community, conclusions are still tentative. Admittedly, they may have to remain so because of the limited evidence at hand.

In many cases recent works on the language, structure and literary techniques of the gospel have led to a more precise understanding of the text. Yet one wonders whether johannine scholars in these years have equalled Westcott or Bultmann in their exceptional familiarity with and sense of the language of John, of its nuances and niceties. It is perhaps significant that no scholar in recent times has undertaken to revise E.A. Abbott's works /99/ of the first decade of this century on the vocabulary and language of John or to produce something similar in the light of contemporary scholarship.

Finally, there still remains the need, as R. Kysar has pointed out, /100/ to find categories which do justice to the evangelist's thought and which are not loaded with either modern connotations or terms which belong to later theology. For example, how can we express in suitable categories the tension between "flesh" and "glory" in Christology? Hopefully research will continue in such areas since there is still plenty of elbow room for the enthusiastic disciple of John. Let him not be discouraged by the vast plethora of literature, for the evangelist himself was conscious of

how much more could be written: "But there are also many other things...; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (21:25).

Notes

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The most comprehensive work is: R.Kysar, The Fourth Evangelist and his Gospel: An Examination of Contemporary Scholarship, Minneapolis, 1975

- ✓ 3. R.Kysar's work deals with this period, although he mentions some works published in 1974.
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5. J.Bruns, New York, 1971
6. E.g. C.M.Martini, Gli Esercizi Ignaziani Alla Luce Di S.Giovanni, Rome, 1976
7. This first main section of the article is dependent on the work of R.Kysar but he does not deal with works on the structures and style of the Gospel (cf. subsection d)).
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G. Appleton

The Jewishness of Jesus

Jesus was born a Jew, he lived as a Jew, he died a Jew. This should be a significant fact for both Christians and Jews. For it is Jesus who both unites and divides us.

Christians have often longed to get back to the historical Jesus. In my student days two very different books on this subject were widely read and discussed: Glover's 'Jesus of History' and Schweitzer's 'Quest of the Historical Jesus'. The first suggested that a study of the Gospels could re-capture the days of his background and ministry; the second came to the conclusion that it was almost impossible to do so. One of the pleas of this lecture is that Jesus the Jew is the historical Jesus and that therefore we need the help of Jews to discover the Jesus of the first 30 years and so see the relevance of his personality and teaching. In the age in which we live there is much emphasis on the humanity of Jesus, almost a demand that he must be fully human if he is to be of real help to his followers and to those interested enough to discover his mystery. To the former the hope is to come to Godhood through the manhood; to the latter to find in him the pattern of God-willed human living. Both hopes can be helped forward by a neighbourly and brotherly interest from Jews, though an open and humble receptiveness is needed by those who call themselves disciples of him who began his mission from God as Jesus the Jew. In addition there is in the mind of Christians the desire to deepen their understanding of the Jesus of Christian faith. The basic documents of my study will be the Hebrew Bible which we Christians call the Old Testament and which was the only Bible that Jesus and his first followers knew, and the additional Testament which recorded the experience and faith of those first followers who except for one writer were all Jews. So we may say that Jews wrote the New Testament also.

In the first days there was considerable speculation about the spiritual lineage of both John the Baptist and Jesus. Did each of them claim to be the Christ, or Elijah, or 'that prophet', meaning the successor whom

Moses looked forward to carrying on his work, expressed in Deuteronomy 18: 15, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren and him shall you heed' strengthening the hope of Moses with a divine promise in 18: 18 'I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.' This reference is quoted by Peter in Acts 3: 22 and by Stephen in Acts 7: 37. I quote these texts not to prove that we Christians are right in claiming that they were fulfilled in Jesus, but to suggest that Jesus took them as his personal vocation and that his earliest followers recognised that he had done so convincingly.

Let me try to adduce evidence that Jesus deliberately modelled himself on Moses. After the spiritual experience of his baptism Jesus went apart into the harsh countryside around Jericho for 40 days. Moses on Mt. Sinai had spent 40 days alone with God, seeking to find from the mind of God a divine law by which his people should live. Jesus in his 40 days in the desert was seeking from the mind of God how he should further the Kingdom of God and fulfil his own calling from God. Ought we not to see that the Law of the Lord by which both individuals and the first people of God should live, and the Rule of God in the hearts and affairs of other peoples of God are related and could possibly be talking about the same thing? If this is a possibility, then those exquisite parables of Jesus about the Kingdom as a seed, a treasure, a net gathering all kinds of human fish, a divine banquet to which all kinds of people are in the end invited, are surely describing the Torah as well as the Kingdom.

In the implication that the Torah and the Kingdom are available for all, was Jesus not showing himself a devoted son of Abraham, who believed that through him and his family all the families of the world should find a blessing and discover themselves as peoples of God? Did Jesus not accept the revelation of the Torah that man, all men were created in the image of God and therefore capable of communion with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, open to hear his word and revelation, and receive the salvation that He wills for all?

Whatever may have been the historical facts of the gospel incident which Christians speak of as the Feeding of the 5,000, there would seem to be little doubt that Jesus thought of it as related to the providential feeding of the Israelites with manna in the exodus. Both feedings, in his thought, were provided by God. The first nourished and strengthened their bodies and brought great encouragement to the anxious minds of those journeying to the promised land, the second, a logical development, was meant to be spiritual food, bread of heaven, to sustain all who were journeying to the heavenly Jerusalem, the eternal home of the human spirit.

Moses, encouraged by the non-Israelite Jethro, appoints 70 elders to help in his task, on whom the Spirit fell: Jesus appointed 70 additional messengers whom he sent out to the villages and towns of Israel, over whom he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit when he heard of the victories over Satan and the healing of men's minds and spirits. Perhaps we are permitted to see in the choice of 70 in each case, a reference to the symbolic number of the nations of the world. (Numbers 11: 24-25, Luke 10: 17-21).

Another parallel that fascinates me is the incident of the brazen serpent in the desert, which Moses caused to be lifted up before the terrified people attacked by venomous serpents. The initial lifting up may have been that of a dead snake, which both relieved their fear and convinced them that the brood of vipers was not invincible. (Numbers 21: 8,9). Jesus in John 3: seems to be saying that the lifting up of his body will deliver men from the fear and sting of ubiquitous death.

There is one more incident that is relevant in the account of what the Second Testament calls the Transfiguration, in which Jesus is facing in anticipation growing hostility and probable death. To the three watching disciples it seemed that he was conferring with two spiritual figures who then or later were identified as Moses and Elijah, two of the greatest prophets, who both felt keenly the sinfulness and opposition of the people of their own time. Their spiritual presence on Mt Tabor must have been a great help to Jesus and an assurance to us that the God of Moses and Elijah, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the God of Jesus, is the God of the living. One last

point can be added from the parable of Dives and Lazarus in which the rich man in purgatory pleads with Father Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers, a request met with the response, doubtless expressing Jesus' own conviction of faith 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead', (Luke 16: 31), a text seldom quoted even by people like myself who believe that God works in and through Judaism to-day.

It would seem clear from this study of New Testament texts dealing with the relation of Jesus and Moses, that any Christians and Jews who claim to see opposition and rivalry between them are mistaken.

Chapters 5-7 of St Matthew's Gospel show how deeply Jesus had studied the Torah, how he applied it to his own life, and how he took its commands down into the realm of thought, character and motive. 'Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the prophets. I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so shall be called least in the Kingdom of heaven'. Doubtless there were discussions about the interpretation and application, and arguments about oral additions and modifications. In the Sermon on the Mount murder is traced to hatred in the heart; adultery to undisciplined looking and imagination; truth is demanded whether on oath or in ordinary speech; the love of neighbour must apply to enemies as well as friends; all must be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect. The Sermon on the Mount must not be taken as a negating of the Torah, but a deep fulfilling of it, an exposition of the observance of the Torah which Jesus expected from his disciples.

In this last sentence there may be a possible resolving of the tension between present-day Christians and Jews about non-violence and love towards enemies. An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, is an expression of justice, in itself a great advance on unrestrained retaliation. It is Jesus the Jew who has laid on his followers the duty of returning good for evil, and of being

ready to go further than statutory duty - dutifully going the required mile, but ready to go an extra mile out of generosity and love. He expects those who enrol as his disciples to do this, perhaps he hopes that one day others will accept this law of unrestricted love. A final word to his Jewish disciples was not a further endorsement of the golden rule to love one's neighbour as one's self, but something new, namely that those disciples should love one another as he loved them. One of the saddest moments in my life was at a discussion between Christians and Jews when I was rash enough to ask the Jewish speaker how far the year of release, and the jubilee of jubilees of the Torah was observed today, to receive the reply 'We Jews can no more fulfil this idealism than you Christians obey the Sermon on the Mount'. We both have to plead forgiveness from a God of justice and love.

There was another vocation which Jesus accepted from his Bible - that of the Servant of the Lord, worked out in the four Servant poems of the second half of the book of Isaiah (42: 1-4, 49: 1-6, 50: 4-9, 52: 13 - 53: 12). In the first song the Servant's call is described: he will not crush a broken reed nor quench a dimly burning wick: he will bring true religion to the earth. In the second song, the Servant feels that he has laboured in vain with his own people and is then told that it is too small a task to raise up again the tribes of Israel, he is to be a light to the nations, an agent of God's universal salvation. The third song tells us of growing opposition and suffering. In the last song the Servant is dead and those who knew him confess that they had thought his suffering and death were a punishment by God, but now they realized that he was wounded for their sins and that through his death forgiveness and redemption became available for all.

The direct quotations and indirect references to these four passages in the New Testament, make it clear that Jesus accepted the role of the Suffering Servant, and out of this experience came his dedication 'I am among you as a servant' and his hope that his followers would become a community of love and service to the world. Jews believe that the Suffering Servant represents Israel having to meet hostility and persecution both from the nations and the Christian Church. The more I learn of the relationship be-

tween Jews and Christians down the centuries, the more appalled I am at the record of the Church.

It was in his emphasis on God as the central fact and priority of his life that Jesus was so magnificently a Jew. He picked out the Shema as the first and greatest commandment 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul and strength', and he put 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' as the second, thus making the same choice as contemporary rabbis.

To Jesus the Jew God is essentially 'Father', that is the word that best expresses to him the meaning of God, and to it he adds from Jewish family life the word 'Abba' with its content of family love and familiarity. God is not only 'My Father' but 'Your Father' as well, Our Father, Father of all. Jesus is always wanting to do the things he sees God doing, always wanting to speak the things he hears God saying. Let me quote just four texts from the 4th Gospel to illustrate the priority of his thinking about God, the intimacy of his relationship with God, and the totality of his dependence on God:

He who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him (5:29) I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me (5: 30) My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me (7: 16) I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works (14: 10).

There was a moment in his life when God seemed hidden, when he seemed forsaken by God as well as by man. At that moment of desolation on the cross, it was a cry of an earlier Jew which expressed the extent to which he missed God. 'Eloi! Eloi! My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?' That cry revealed not only the depth of desolation, but the height of faith (Psalm 22:1) - in spite of the physical agony and the spiritual loneliness, he still cried out 'My God!' Christians as well as Jews will remember a similar cry from an earlier sufferer. 'Though he slay me, yet will I wait for him' (Job 13: 15), and we Christians and Jews of this generation will remember a contemporary cry of Jewish faith inscribed on the wall of the Warsaw ghetto:

I believe in the sun, even if it does not shine,
 I believe in love, even if I do not feel it,
 I believe in God, even if I do not see him.

I pray that I may be as theocentric in my thinking and devotion as Jesus was.

Jesus lived his whole life within the culture and cultus of his own people. His parents observed the sacramental ceremonies of childhood - circumcision and presentation to God as a firstborn. He became a bar-mitzvah, and it may have been at that first visit to Jerusalem for the Passover that he was chosen to ask the question 'What is the meaning of this service?'. It was on that visit that he became so excitedly happy in asking the rabbis the questions arising in his boyish mind and hearing their answers that he forgot the time and imagined that his parents would know where to find him. It was probably on that visit that the Fatherhood of God became real to him, so that from then on the Temple was 'my Father's house' and the meaning of life was to be about the Father's business.

His custom was to attend the synagogue on the sabbath day, he went up to Jerusalem for the great feasts, he spent hours in prayer in the silence of the night and the quiet of the hills. Some Biblical scholars think that the Last Supper was on the occasion of the Khiddush, rather than the Passover, and the two disciples at Emmaus recognised him by the way he took bread, broke it and said over it a blessing of God. He died a Jew, perhaps on the day when the Passover Lambs were killed. His last words 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit', were as Jewish then as they are now. He was hastily buried and his body only partially embalmed, because the sabbath hour was at hand.

Any meditation on the death of Jesus cannot avoid the question of who was responsible for it. All down the centuries since the first Good Friday Christians have held the Jews guilty of his killing, not just some Jews but all Jews. To many Christians the crucifixion is still the unforgiveable sin, regardless of the benefits which we profess to see accruing to us from his death - the revelation of faith to the uttermost, the manifestation of invincible love, the assurance that if a true man could forgive all that inflicted pain of body, mind and spirit, the true God, the Father to whom he was obedient son, could forgive the

sins of the whole world. The sacrificial system of the first volume which Jews and Christians possess in common breathes a deep longing for forgiveness, a deep sense of the wide gap between the holiness of God and even the best efforts of man. From an early point in his ministry it was clear that Jesus expected and experienced opposition, as most of the prophets did. He also thought that in the end he would be called upon to die, and he was prepared to do this willingly if it should be the Father's will. Both he and the writers of the New Testament, as well as the writers in the First Testament believed that any covenant with God needed to be ratified by the seal of blood. He believed that his vocation was to ratify the new covenant longed for by Jeremiah by his own blood, as the accounts of the Last Supper relate. It was almost as if he felt that his death was necessary, to seal the sacrifice of his life's obedience. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews sums up this sacrificial willingness in a verse from Psalm 40. 'I am come to do thy will, as it is written of me in the roll of the book, O my God. I delight to do it, for thy Law is written within my heart'. Psalm 40: 7-8, Hebrews 10: 7. The ideal of the Suffering Servant, the new covenant for the forgiveness of sins and his interpretation of Messiahship all seemed confirmed by his death. Once more basically Jewish. The Gospels also show the sharp pain in the mind of Jesus, his bearing on his heart the humanly intolerable burden of the sins of the world. Surely in this Jesus was being truly Jewish. The sins of the world grow more evil, more destructive, more intolerable, more deeply individual and more extensively social and corporate. It is perhaps providential that Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and the Day of Atonement punctuate the yearly calendar, with their call to penitence.

Undoubtedly some Jews were involved in the physical liquidation of Jesus. But I would hazard the opinion that more regretted it. Jesus was not without his friends in that last week: there were the pilgrims from Galilee, the man who lent him the ass for the ride into Jerusalem, the owner of the upper room, Simon of Cyrene was almost certainly a Jew, there were the women of Jerusalem who wept as Jesus dragged his cross to the place of execution, there were the crowds mentioned by Luke as smiting their

breasts in despair as they watched what happened, there were those who knew Jesus and the women from Galilee who stood at a distance and watched in silent dismay. There was Joseph of Arimathea, a Jew of standing, who determined to give the body of Jesus honourable burial, and Nicodemus, now full of courage and open commitment. There were too many friends of Jesus to justify any sweeping condemnation of the whole nation.

The authority to sentence a man to death and to carry out the execution lay in the hands of the occupying power. The Roman governor had the last word and he wrote it over the cross - Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews - both a taunt to those who would not accept him as such, and a brutal reminder of how Rome treated anyone who might be suspected or accused of such a pretension. Yet one cannot help feeling some sympathy with Pilate. He was the representative of an unpopular occupying power, he had been in trouble earlier with the authorities at Rome, the provocative entry into Jerusalem of Jesus, accompanied by a crowd of cheering Galileans joined by Jerusalemites who probably welcomed any nationalist demonstration, put him in a dilemma. Passover time was an anxious time and he only knew Jesus from what was reported about him by anxious members of the establishment or his own officials, though his cross-examination of Jesus suggested that he was harmless. He could take no risks - sentence was passed and hastily executed. That should have settled the matter, but it did not, and 2000 years later we are still arguing and writing books about it, and 1000 million Christians believe that there was a divine intervention.

Had Christians been true to the spirit of Jesus there would not have been the endless hostility and persecution of Jews, acquiesced in and often initiated by the Church. Today we are becoming aware of our un-Jesus-like attitudes and actions. There is not time in this lecture to enlarge on this. Let a prayer of Pope John XXIII show penitence and change of heart:

O God, we are conscious that many centuries of blindness have blinded our eyes so that we no longer see the beauty of thy chosen people, nor recognise in their faces and features our privileged

brethren. We realise that the mark of Cain stands upon our foreheads. Across the centuries our brother Abel has lain in the blood which we drew or which we caused to be shed by forgetting Thy love. Forgive us for the curse we falsely attached to their name as Jews. Forgive us for crucifying thee a second time in their flesh. For we knew not what we did.

I must not pass over a reciprocal and more deserved accusation and judgment of Christians by Jews, who see in the holocaust the logical consequence of the theological condemnation by Christians and the Church. There seems no doubt to me that this condemnatory, unforgiving attitude helped to create an atmosphere in which Hitler and the Nazis found it easy to carry out their policy of extermination. I can understand the bitterness of many Jews at the failure of the Churches to intervene. Looking back, I remember that I read Mein Kampf with horror, but could not believe that even Hitler would be evil enough and ruthless enough to put it into practice. When he did, with the apparent acquiescence of the majority in his own nation, the opportunity to intervene in any effective way had been lost. Our prayer must be 'Father, forgive us, for we know not what to do'. Both our communities need forgiveness and both need to forgive. We need to be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful. Yet having pleaded for forgiveness, we need to be on the watchtower with Habbakuk, on the lookout for the earliest signs of anti-semitism.

We also need to look at a frequent criticism that the New Testament is anti-semitic. I think there is some truth in this. In the Gospels Jesus was often critical of individuals and classes of people, conscious of their temptations and class failings. But those were within the nation, following the example of the prophets, who could never have been popular. I would like to make two points. The first is an insight from Krister Stendahl the Chairman of the World Council of Churches Consultation on the Church and the Jewish people, who emphasises that the New Testament was written in a minority situation, so that it is understandable that there should be defensive attitudes from time to time, even aggressive defences. The Church soon

became a majority community, says Stendahl and failed to adjust itself to the new situation.

There is one situation, however, in which I have been personally involved, in which the Church is in a decided minority, and that is in the modern state of Israel, where there are $3\frac{1}{2}$ million Jews, $\frac{1}{2}$ million Muslims and only 50,000 Christians. This, to my mind, is a very wholesome situation for the Church to be in, for now we Christians have to listen, have to be in a subordinate position, occasionally accept legislation which we may feel to be discriminating, be in contact with a Jewish theological faculty of splendid scholarship and vigorous confidence, which resents any aggressive approach and forcefully rejects the centuries-old Christian assumption that with the separation of Church and Synagogue, Judaism lost any theological validity and spiritual effectiveness.

My own spiritual life is nourished deeply from St. John's Gospel, with its mystical interpretation of Jesus, but for some years now I have been troubled by the seeming hostility to Jews generally, as if Jesus were speaking from a point in time after the separation. My first explanation to myself was that this seeming wholesale hostility was a sign of the late date of writing, reflecting the situation after the influx of Gentiles into the Church and the destruction of Jerusalem. An insight from a Jewish Biblical scholar has brought me light, in the convincing thought that the term 'the Jews' so often used by the fourth evangelist does not refer to Jews generally, but is descriptive of Jews from the south or the authorities from Jerusalem, much in the same way as the term 'Galileans' is used of Jews from the north.

There are some notable but not often noted references in other books of the New Testament, where a more friendly and inclusive note is struck. St Paul in Romans 9 - 11, where he is wrestling with the problem of Jewish-Christian relations, asks the question 'Has God rejected his people?' and answers it with an emphatic 'By no means'. In his illustration of the olive tree, it is Christians who are grafted on to the original cultivated olive - it is not another completely different olive. Even in a growingly polemical relationship, we are still together.

Further misunderstanding has come about by the way in

which one word in Greek and in English is used to cover more than one meaning, 'nomos' and 'law', where the word can sometimes seem to apply to the Torah and sometimes to a legalism or literalism which is not confined to any one community of faith, but which is a temptation in all communities of faith. My heart rejoices when the writer of the book of Revelation speaks of four and twenty elders worshipping before the throne of God and of the Lamb, two sets of twelve and in his description of the holy city, the spiritual Jerusalem, where the foundations of the wall of the city have the names of the twelve apostles on them, and the twelve gates have engraved upon them the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Still more heartening in the writer's vision is the perception that the gates of the city are never shut by day or night, and there is no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, 'for God is its light and its lamp is the Lamb'.

Yet ultimately Church and Synagogue separated, and each went its own independent and often rival way, developing on parallel lines, which in the geometrical metaphor never meet, except in an inaccessible infinity. In our age can we not see that the lines are beginning to veer towards one another, can we not accept that infinity is a symbol of God? The separation of Christians and Jews, the first break in the unity of the people of God, was to my mind a great tragedy, and one which I dare to think was never envisaged by Jesus, nor by his great interpreter Paul, who also, like his Master, was born a Jew, lived as a Jew, and died a Jew.

Let Paul the Jew have the last word about our possible coming together. I paraphrase Romans 11: 26 for my own faith and devotion, trying to see its relevance for our relationship today: 'if our mutual rejection of each other has resulted in innumerable millions of non-Jews coming to a knowledge of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, what would our coming together mean to the world, but life from the dead? And for Jews, after the persistence of Judaism through so many centuries, a vindication of their faith in the providential working of God in history. Let me ask another question: are we Christians and Jews together called to give back to the Western world faith in the Living God?'

In answer to this last question of mine, I find inspiration and encouragement from a Jewish writer. Hans Schoeps

in his book The Jewish-Christian Argument has this relevant paragraph: 'If there is anything this age demands, if there is anything that gives reason for hope, it is this: Christian and Jew, each within the common religious dialogue and also independent of it, each faithful to his own beliefs and his own way of life, bear common witness together before the world that they possess tidings from the divine realm; they go through history together as corporeal evidence of the truth of God'.

Note

1. This Lecture was given as the St Paul's Lecture for 1979 at St Botolph's Church, Aldgate, on 14 November, 1979. It will be printed as one of the annual pamphlets of CCJU and copies may be obtained from that body, at St Botolph's Church, Aldgate, London, EC3 at a cost of 33p, including postage. Bishop Appleton also included the lecture on "The Jewishness of Jesus" in a 1978 series of lectures in Union Theological College.

Kevin Condon: Apropos of the Divorce Sayings.

As every student of form criticism is aware, the analysis and sifting of the variations that occur in the parallel transmissions of traditional material can come up with striking results. Perhaps too striking. It may be that the pressures put on tenuous variations of form and expression are excessive. Nonetheless, the exercise is worthwhile, if only for the new vistas that it opens up. One particularly fruitful field for the application of the exercise is the divorce question. For the absoluteness of Christ's position on divorce was bound to lead to questionings in concrete situations. That it did so already in the primitive church is evident from the variations that occur in the New Testament texts, and also in the course of the later textual transmission. /1

The passages on divorce fall into two categories: firstly, the debate or conflict story of Mt 19.1-8 and Mk 10.1-9; and secondly, the logion now attached to it (which Mk, however, clearly separates from it): Mt 19.10 and Mk 10.10-12. That this was originally an isolated saying is confirmed by its occurrence also in the Q tradition: Mt 5.32 and Lk 16.18.

Finally, there is the instruction on marriage, virginity, and divorce, in 1 Cor 7.1-16. And we shall give some consideration to the injunction on marriage 'to one wife (or husband)' in the Pastoral Epistles.

Mk's introduction to the debate, 'And setting out from there he came to the territory of Judaea (and) /2 beyond the Jordan,' is one of Mk's favourite transition techniques (cf. 6.1; 7.24; 9.3) and says little or nothing about the real situation. Suffice it to say that it comes after a period of instruction of the disciples and that now begins the journey to Jerusalem. 'Pharisees came up /3 and to test him they asked, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' But the question makes for an unreal situation. For it is scarcely conceivable that Jews would ask about the liceity of

divorce itself, since it was presupposed in the Torah (Dt 24.1) and universally recognized. There was a saying of the Rabbis that 'God gave divorce to Israel; he did not give it to the Gentiles.' /4 The question at issue in Judaism was not the liceity of divorce but the grounds for divorce. And so Mt makes at this point the first of his 'corrections' to Mk. His question runs: 'Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any and every cause (kata pasan aitian)?' For this goes some way towards creating a situation, since it confronts Jesus with the known controversy between Hillel and Shammai regarding the grounds for divorce. One has to conclude therefore that Mark (or the community from which the tradition came) changed the original debate and brought it into line with the saying in v.10, in which Jesus rejects divorce altogether, thus giving it a much more radical ring than is to be found in Mt's.

The omission of reference to the grounds for divorce in vv.2 and 4 is not the only feature that leads us to question the originality of Mk's version. There is also the awkward structure of the debate. Normally a debate develops through a counter question put by our Lord to the interrogators, which leads to a counter argument. But here the counter question, 'What did Moses command you?' is one that gives the advantage to the opponents, so that there is no counter argument. /5 A comparison with Mt makes this obvious. For Mt puts the Genesis text first, and this leads to a counter question on the lips of the opponents (where it obviously belongs) regarding the 'permission' of Dt 24.1: 'Why then did Moses command...?' So brilliant is Mt's re-structuring of Mk that in the opinion of Bultmann he must have had a 'rabbinic formation'. /6 For Mt not only re-orders the debate, not only gives it its true motif, but also hints at the grounds for the dispute in the porneia of v.9. /7 Indeed, his re-structuring is so brilliant that one wonders if he was merely improving on Mk (as we now have it) and not using another source.

In both Mt and Mk the direction of the debate is dictated by the logion with which it now concludes. If, as Mt has it, Jesus was originally challenged to decide between the schools of Hillel and Shammai, then his

appeal to the Genesis text and his curt 'What God has joined, let not man separate,' would have been the decisive answer which takes the ground away from both Shammai and Hillel. The saying on divorce - Mt omits Mk's observation that it was given later to the disciples in the house - would then confirm that Jesus forbade divorce, while the added mē epi porneia shows that the controversy over the meaning of Dt 24.1 is still shimmering through. At all these stages therefore - the initial question, the ordering of the debate, and the final logion, Mt reflects a Jewish situation.

This is not so in the case of Mk. For by omitting the reference to the grounds for divorce Mk turns the debate into a radical repudiation of divorce altogether, and takes it out of a Jewish situation. Moreover, by adding to the logion of Jesus, 'and if a wife divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery,' he puts the whole passage into a Gentile situation. For it was only in Rome that a wife had the right in certain circumstances to divorce her husband.

The Saying on Divorce

(1)

Mt 5:32 - ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι, καὶ ὃς ἐὰν ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσῃ, μοιχᾶται.

(2)

Lk 16:18 - Πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ γαμῶν ἑτέραν μοιχεύει, καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην ἀπὸ ἀνδρὸς γαμῶν μοιχεύει.

(3)

Mk 10:11 - καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· ὃς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην, μοιχᾶται ἐπ' αὐτήν· (12) καὶ ἐὰν αὐτὴ ἀπολύσασα τὸν ἄνδρα αὐτῆς γαμήσῃ ἄλλον, μοιχᾶται.

(4)

Mt 19:9 - λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι ὃς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην, μοιχᾶται.

From all the texts, including Mt's, as will be seen, and St Paul's instruction in 1 Cor 7, it follows that Christ regarded marriage as indissoluble, and that to marry again while one's spouse was living was to commit adultery. But the variations are surprising and interesting, and possibly reflect some questioning regarding the possibility of divorce in the early church. In view of what has been said, Mk's de-Judaized version of the saying and its accommodation to a different milieu must be regarded as secondary. /8 But it still remains difficult to determine which of the other three is the most original.

Mt's parallel to Mk (text 4) omits the ep autēn, omits also the second part of Mk's text (on the wife divorcing her husband) and adds a qualification to the 'whoever divorces his wife' - viz., 'except for porneia' (see below). In all of these Mt shows himself to be closer to the Jewish situation. For in Judaism a wife did not have a right to divorce her husband; and this being so, a husband who divorces his wife and re-marries could scarcely be said to commit adultery 'against her'. And by adding 'except for porneia' Mt seems to be making some concession to Dt 24.1. It may well have been that in early Jewish-Christian circles a husband was obliged to divorce - or better, 'send away' - /9 a wife who was guilty of porneia. A careful reading of Mt, however, shows that neither husband nor wife is permitted to re-marry, for the previous bond still remains. Indeed, Mt seems rather to be emphasizing the indissolubility of marriage.

The Jewishness of Mt's standpoint is shown up even more strongly by a comparison of his Q text (no.1) with that of Lk (no.2). Bultmann regards the Lucan version (that a man who sends away his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery) as the more original. /10 Mt's version, on the other hand (that he who divorces his wife makes her an adulteress - i.e. forces her into an adulterous union) is 'künstlich' and therefore must have arisen later. But it might well be argued /11 that in Mt's version a situation is reflected in which the right to divorce rests with the male, and in which adultery is

committed only when another man's wife is involved. A husband who sends his wife away forces her into another marriage and makes her commit adultery against a bond which Mt considers to be still existent, notwithstanding the fact that he has sent her away. So too in the second part of the saying: 'he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery,' because he breaks a bond which already exists. On the other hand, Lk's 'Everyone who dismisses his wife and marries another (woman?) commits adultery' is a departure from this more original Jewish situation. For in view of the second part, 'and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery,' the 'other woman' presumably does not have to be married. /12 'Both Matthew and Luke presuppose the indissolubility of marriage. Only Matthew looks at it entirely from the male standpoint, and by this token it may be assumed that Matthew is closer to what a Palestinian Jesus or his spokesman may have said.' /13

Matthew's Exceptive Clauses

In his parallels to both Mk and Q Mt inserts an exception clause: in the former case, 'not for' or 'except for'; and in the latter case, 'apart from a case of porneia,' or 'except by reason of porneia'. /14 The exceptions have always been problematic, firstly, in that it is not clear whether or to what extent he really makes an exception; and secondly, in that the meaning of porneia in Mt is no less obscure than is the Cerwath dabar of Dt 24.1.

Various interpretations have been given to explain the clauses. a) The view most commonly held by Protestant commentators is that in the community to which Mt belongs the severity of Jesus's saying was modified and that an exception was made in cases of porneia to allow for divorce and re-marriage. /15 It is allowed, however, that this concession must have been a later provision - for the authenticity of Mt's text is not in question - and that the other sources express the genuine will of Jesus. In the context, however, of the Sermon on the Mount, it is difficult to allow this view. For if in 5.32 Mt is allowing a full exception in the case of porneia, which would permit of re-marriage, he is demolishing the antithesis between Moses and Christ

which he has set out to establish. The position of Christ would not surpass that of Shammai; and instead of being superseded, the Law would simply be given an interpretation. /16 b) Some have held that the exceptive particles (parektos, mē epi) are susceptible of an inclusive sense: 'even in cases of porneia'. But such an interpretation puts an excessive strain on the Greek, and would also be superfluous and misleading. /17 c) Another view is that porneia refers to illegitimate or incestuous unions, as is probable in Acts 15.20, 29. /18 But in a Jewish context such an exception would be taken for granted and would therefore sound banal. Apart from that, the immediate allusion seems rather to be to the Cerwath dabar of Dt 24.1. d) Finally, there is the possibility that Mt envisages the dismissal of a wife in cases of porneia, but not divorce and re-marriage. The logion on divorce, which in Mk is addressed later to the disciples in the house, is addressed in Mt directly to the interrogators. It seems therefore that in this Jewish context, and in reference to a dispute among the Rabbis, Mt is safeguarding Dt 24.1 /19 - perhaps even making a concession to Shammai - not in the sense that divorce is permitted but that a wife guilty of porneia should and must be sent away. On the other hand, a husband who dismisses an innocent wife forces her into adultery against a bond which is already there, and is indissoluble (5.32a). A man therefore who marries a dismissed wife commits adultery (5.32b).

Juridical separation in the canonical sense certainly did not exist in the ancient world. But that a woman could leave her husband is clear from 1 Cor 7.11. According to St Paul, she must either remain single, or be reconciled to her husband. Now it may be that a woman could more easily remain single in the hellenistic world. But in the Jewish world a woman did not have independent rights. She could 'be married' but she could not 'marry'. While married, she was under the potestas of her husband; after her husband's death, or if he divorced her, she was answerable to her nearest male relative. /20 According to the mores of Jewish society, therefore, it is conceivable that a wife guilty of porneia had to be sent away; on the other hand, if an innocent wife was sent away, she was being forced into an adulterous union (Mt 5.32).

The difficulty remains of the word porneia. Why does Mt use this vague, generic term instead of the specific moicheia, if this is what he means? There is no more tantalizing problem connected with this question. Porneia (Hebr., zenuth) normally meant prostitution, or a condition analogous to it (e.g. living in concubinage.) /21 That it can also mean adultery is inferred by many scholars from Sir 23.23 (en porneia emoicheuthē), but this is by no means a certain conclusion. The most probable explanation is that Mt is holding to the terminology of Dt 24.1. But what else he could mean except adultery is difficult to see. /22

Paul

Paul's instruction to the married, which comes 'not from himself but the Lord,' /23 confirms the datum elsewhere, that Jesus did not countenance divorce: 'a wife must not separate from her husband; if she has separated, /24 let her remain single, or else be reconciled to her husband; and a husband must not divorce his wife' (1 Cor 7.10). What is strange is that this clear-cut statement is in the middle of an instruction which, from start to finish, gives a preference to virginity over married life. 'It is good (= better) /25 for a man not to have relations with a woman. But in view of the dangers /26 of fornication, let each man have his own wife, and each wife her own husband' (1-2) Paul would prefer to see all men (and women) like himself, i.e. unmarried (6,8,40).

Modern criticism is perplexed by this apparently negative attitude of Paul to marriage. He gives a theological answer, says Conzelmann, /27 which allows freedom to the Christian. But his answer is stamped by an ascetical motivation. Virginity, or enkrateia, is the better. It is a gift, a charisma. /28 For those who do not possess it, marriage is the best safeguard.

One wonders, however, if this assessment does not miss the point, namely, that there is a religious dialectic running through the whole chapter: where does the holy lie, and where not. There was doubtless a similar pre-occupation among the Corinthians, /29 and Paul may well be correcting it. At any rate the religious dimension

prescribes for Paul that celibacy or virginity is a more holy state than marriage (1,7); that 'the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit' (34); that in a mixed marriage 'the unbelieving wife is consecrated (viz., made holy) through her husband' (14); that 'otherwise your children would be unclean, whereas now they are holy.' /30 This religious pre-occupation with the holy carries with it a strong sense of sin. For sin in this conception is not merely a breach of faith, or an act of disobedience to a divine norm; it is an alienation from the holy /31 - an alienation that persists until the situation is in some way put right. Undoubtedly Paul is speaking from the standpoint of his own renunciation of marriage. But one can be quite sure that the same dialectic, the same quest of the holy is also pursued by the married. The awareness of the holy and the sense of sin made divorce a far more heinous thing than it can possibly be in a secular world.

A similar understanding of the sacredness of marriage is to be found in the Pastoral Epistles: the ruling that a minister of the gospel should be the husband (or wife) of (not more than) one spouse - the episkopos in 1 Tim 3,2; presbyteroi in Tit 1.6; deacons in 1 Tim 3.12; 'widows' in 1 Tim 5.9. It would seem that marriage, once entered upon, is a lasting bond which, ideally, should survive even the death of one of the partners.

In sum, marriage is viewed throughout the New Testament as an indissoluble bond which, according to the debate of Mt-Mk, owes its character to the unity willed by God in the creation of male and female. To remarry while one's partner is alive is to violate an existing bond, and therefore to commit adultery.

At the same time marriages do break down, creating two problems: a pastoral one, so far as the individual is concerned, and a social one, so far as society is concerned. The first has been there from the beginning. Paul is aware of it and makes a concession in the case of mixed marriages (1 Cor 7.12ff). Matthew is undoubtedly aware of it, and makes a concession to the extent that a husband may (or must) send a wife away in a case of unchastity. The church has always been aware of it, to

the extent that the only form of marriage which it has not dissolved is one that is ratum et consummatum (fully sacramental and blessed with children.) But in view of the social problems created within society through the increasing breakdown of marriages, and of the sense of the 'holy', it may have to yield on this frontier too.

Notes

1. Particularly Mark 10.10 (see note 8). Also Mt 19.9, but here more by way of harmonizations.
2. The 'and' is omitted by Mt and bracketed as doubtful in The Greek New Testament.
3. Proselthontes Phariseioi is omitted by the Western text and bracketed as doubtful in The Greek New Testament.
4. Jerus.Talmud, Qiddushin, l.58c, 16ff.
5. Cf. Bultmann, Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition, p.25.
6. Bultmann, op.cit., 25.
7. The allusion is more obvious in the parallel of 5.32: logos porneias. In spite of the inversion of cerwath dabar - it also occurs in Shammai (cf. Billerbeck, I, 313) - and even though the LXX rendering is aschemon pragma, it is widely accepted that Mt's porneia is an allusion to the cerwah of Dt 24.1. The controversy arose in that Rabbi Shammai put the emphasis on the cerwah and therefore restricted the grounds for divorce to a shameful impropriety on the part of the wife; whereas Hillel put the emphasis on the dabar and would therefore extend the grounds even to the burning of the dinner.
8. In the course of the later transmission exception was taken to the wife's 'divorcing' her husband in v.12. D reads, 'if she leaves her husband and marries another.' Instead of 'marries another' AC²N¹⁷ read 'and becomes married to another'.
9. Both translations are of course valid. Some would

argue that apoluein is almost a technical term for 'divorce'. In fact there is a surprisingly wide selection of words used for 'divorce': in Paul, aphiēmi; in the gospels, apoluo; in the Lxx, exapostellō; in Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, apotemnein. For an excellent summary of the usage cf. Bruce Vawter, Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol.39, p.536, n.16.

10. Bultmann, op.cit., p.25.

11. Cf. Vawter, op.cit., p.530.

12. 'The "and marries another woman" of Luke, therefore, has changed the focus of the logion far more fundamentally than has the "exceptive" clause introduced by Matthew.' Vawter, p.530f.

13. See also Hauck-Schulz (TWNT, VI, p.591f): 'The meaning then of the clauses (in Mt) is not to give the Christian husband a permission to divorce where the wife has been guilty of marital infidelity; rather, by reason of a juridically unavoidable separation the husband shall be rendered free of any reproach if the wife by her conduct has made the continuation of the marriage impossible.'

14. Cf. Bauer (Arndt-Gingrich), s.v. logos.

15. J.C. Fenton refers to the power of binding and loosing mentioned in Mt 16.19; 18.18. 'The permission to allow divorce in certain circumstances seems to be one example of the use of this authority by the early Church; cf. 1 Cor 7.12ff, 23ff. where Paul gives his opinions on marriage problems; but notice that he distinguishes clearly and explicitly between his opinion and the Lord's command; in these verses in Matthew (5.32; 19.9) the distinction between the original command of the Lord and the Church's legislation has been obscured. (Penguin Commentary, St Matthew, p.90.)

16. Admittedly, the exception clause weakens the anti-thesis; but it does not take it away. The fact that Mt allows it to appear even in the antithesis is seen by Hauck-Schulz as an indication that Mt's form of the logion might possibly be original. (TWNT, VI, p.590f.)

17. Cf. A.Ott, Die Auslegung der nt.lichen Texte über die Ehescheidung, 1911, p.292: parektos, 'he who even in a case of porneia divorces his wife; mē epi, (a parenthesis), 'not even for p. is it allowed.'

A 'praeteritive' interpretation was formerly defended by Bruce Vawter (C.B.Q., vol.16, 1954, p.164): 5.32, 'setting aside the matter of p.'; 19.9, 'p. is not involved.' He no longer holds it. (cf.C.B.Q., vol.39, 1977, p.535.)

Here, perhaps, belongs the enigmatic remark of Conzelmann, Der Erste Brief an die Korinther, Göttingen, 1969, p.145, n.16: '(In the Gospel texts) Mt alone introduces an exception case, 5.32 and 19.9. But in his mind the force of the prohibition is in no way diminished; rather it is made concrete, since the porneia is "impossible". (?)

18. Cf. (especially), J.Bonsirven, Le Divorce dans le Nouveau Testament, Desclée, 1948.

19. 'By the toning down of mē epi porneia...the Mosaic law about the bill of divorcement is saved from completely losing validity.' (Günther Bornkamm in Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew, SCM, 1963, p.158, n.2.)

20. Cf.Ernst Lohmeyer, Das Evangelium des Markus, Göttingen, 1963, p.202.

21. In the rabbinic texts cerwah is often used in the same sense. Cf.Marcus Jastrow, Dictionary of the Targumim, etc., s.v.

22. Heuck-Schulz, 'praktisch Ehebruch' (TWNT, VI, 590). Bauer (Arndt-Gingrich), 'Marital infidelity', s.v.porneia.

23. One of the very few allusions of Paul to a saying of Jesus. But is it a recorded saying, or one that gets its force from the here-and-now preaching of the gospel? The latter seems more probable, both here and in 1Thess 4.15 (cf. Rom 10.17 - dia rhematos Christou.)

24. Aor.Subj. referring to the past. So Conzelmann, p.144.

25. The kalon esti has a certain absolute value. Paul is not here thinking of the imminence of the parousia.

26. Plural, porneiai, 'pointing out the various factors that may bring about sexual immorality.' (Bauer, s.v.)

27. Conzelmann, op.cit., passim.

28. Enkrateia, a 'charisma', as opposed to the normal Greek understanding of it as a virtue (p.144). But Conzelmann does not point up Paul's motivation (v.35): pros to euschēmon kai euparedron tō kuriō aperispastōs.

29. We can only guess at the question asked by the Corinthians (v.1). Conzelmann suggests, 'Is sex allowed at all?' (p.139). Lietzmann - nearer to the mark - 'What are your views about marriage?' (An die Korinther, I/II, Tübingen, 1969, p.28.) In fact he could have been asked for prescriptions on the holy.

30. Conzelmann speaks of the 'massiv dingliche Charakter' of Paul's conception of the holy, betraying a lack of understanding of the religious dialectic. On the latter, see Louis Dupré, The Other Dimension, Doubleday, 1972, passim.

31. Cf. the non peccat in vv.28 and 36.

REVIEWS

B.W.Anderson:

The Eighth Century Prophets

S.P.C.K 1979 pp xvi + 111 £3.25

I remember feeling defeated by a question on my final honours examination paper about Isaiah's view of the holiness of God. Although we read for our commentary on Isaiah, G.B.Gray's I.C.C (and not slighter, more modern works) we did not find it easy to reach into the mind of an eighth century B.C. prophet. Anderson's book is directed at students who miss the prophetic word for the trees of literary criticism. Anderson does not ignore critical findings; indeed, one of the strengths of the book is that it does not pretend (as some books do) that the critical findings are irrelevant to the study of theology. So the student is shown, en passant, form criticism at work, and he is firmly told that "the prophetic message is inseparable from the world of politics, which is the world in which all of us live". Only a brief sketch is given, however, of the eighth century politics, and no attempt is made to relate Amos, Micah and Hosea to contemporary events in more than a general way.

Another strength of this book is that it takes seriously the major problems of the nature of God. Anderson starts well by bringing out the prophetic note that God can be a terror even to his own people. But Anderson will not allow that Amos sees nothing beyond doom (cf. Amos 5.14f). It is through the crisis (according to Anderson's interpretation of these prophets) that the people will find grace to recover their identity and vitality. Divine judgment is inevitable, though there is always the possibility that, as a result the people will turn from their evil ways, or that God himself will modify his plan in response to repentance (Hos.14) or prophetic intercession (Amos 7). Anderson insists (in a phrase of von Rad's) on "the immense freedom at God's disposal" to amend or mitigate his judgment.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 unfold the meaning of the requirement (Mic.6.6) "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God", with useful expositions of the idea of hesed (pp 47ff.) and the knowledge of God

(p.56). Anderson argues that 'what the Lord requires' has already been shown Israel in the history of God's relationship with her: 'he has showed you, o man, what is good'. Ch.7 discusses a theme raised earlier by the possibility of God's repenting of his threats to destroy Israel - the theme of God's involvement in and concern for his people. God is a living God, not the apathetic God (in the technical sense) of Greek philosophy. Anderson quotes Heschel's criticism that 'spiritual to us means ethereal, calm, moderate, slight, imperceptible. We respond to beauty; grandeur is unbearable. We are moved by soft religiosity and would like to think God is lovely, tender and familiar, as if faith were a source of comfort, but not readiness for martyrdom'.

The last chapter explores the prophetic hope visible in Hosea ch.2 and Isaiah ch.9. Anderson sees this latter poem as the climax to a separate booklet, Isaiah 6.1 - 9.7, but he does not make clear whether he sees the poem as an authentic Isaiah oracle. The point is important if we are concerned with an analysis of the eighth century prophet's view of the future; here, I feel, Anderson slips from his usual standard. Again, the message of the names of Isaiah's family is too important to be treated in a paragraph (pp 91-2), and if Anderson's general conclusions are correct (as I think they are) fuller exegesis here would have done much to buttress his earlier picture of 'the therapy of catastrophe'.

Irritatingly, the book sometimes reads as if it is a conscious effort to teach the first year, but, happily, it does the job well. Anderson is particularly good at explaining briefly and clearly the background to some concept or at expounding the argument of a longer passage. There is a useful index of pericopes so treated (p.xvi), from which it appears that Micah gets least and Isaiah most attention. The book in fact well fills what is often a serious gap in the OT lecturer's notebook, and some of us would do well to take a leaf or two out of Anderson's book

before passing it on to our students. And if it makes us turn back to read Heschel's classic volumes once again, we shall profit all the more.

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— J.R.Bartlett

John M.Rist: On the Independence of Matthew and Mark
Cambridge University Press pp132 1978
£5.30

Rist's conclusion, reached by an examination of selected passages, is that there was an early oral period when many stories about Jesus circulated. The stories depended, in the first instance, upon the evidence of 'witnesses', not all of whom were present at every event. When Jesus was accompanied by Peter, James, and John only, the other disciples could only have heard of what happened from those who were present. In this early period there was a mass of stories which were gradually reduced to some kind of ordered sequence; this was especially characteristic of the stories connected with the Passion. At this stage the stories circulated in a variety of forms similar to, but not identical with, the forms eventually embodied in the Gospels. Particular care would be taken to give accurately the words of Jesus; less concern was felt with the narrative.

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark grew up independently upon the basis of similar traditions. Even after the writing of the Gospels the oral tradition continued and may have contributed to the Western readings. Some parallel traditions may be preserved in patristic writers, so accounting for some of their differences from the canonical accounts.

Eventually the Synoptics superseded the tradition, the process probably taking longest in centres like Antioch where the traditions from the eyewitnesses were oldest and enjoyed the greatest authority.

Rist disputes, what Guthrie said had become almost an axiom of NT criticism, that at most oral tradition could account for differences but not similarities. He says that if people tell the same story, particularly if they are concerned to repeat the original words as accurately as possible, similarities will occur.

In his earlier analysis of material which leads to his conclusion that parallel oral traditions (with perhaps some later interpolations into the Gospels) are sufficient to account for the resemblances between Mark and Matthew, Rist examines Mark 2.23 - 6.13 and compares this passage with similar material in Matthew. He decides that it is difficult to suppose that Matthew is following Mark's basic sequence and that there is little evidence to suggest that Mark is following Matthew. He says that there may be indications in this section that Jesus repeated himself (as most preachers do) and that such repetitions were preserved in the tradition. This leads to the important principle that we cannot assume, without further ado, that similarity, or even identity of wording entails literary derivation.

Although the story of Jairus' daughter is found within the section mentioned above, Rist deals with it in another chapter. He says that it is incredible that Mark's account should be derived from Matthew and if, on the other hand, Matthew was writing with Mark's account in front of him his alteration of the position of the story, and his modifications within it, can only be accounted for by attributing to him an extraordinary degree of clumsiness.

Rist's argument rests heavily on the fact that similar, or identical wording, in Matthew and Mark is often found in passages which are preserved in different sequence in the two Gospels, with no obvious explanation for the change in order if one Gospel is derived from the other.

The case made by Rist against a very simple two document

theory (Mark and Q) is strong, and his rejection of the view that Mark's Gospel is derived from canonical Matthew, is well presented.

Some of the details of Rist's thesis are open to question. It is by no means certain, in the absence of references to the Baptist in the epistles, that preaching about Jesus began with an account of John the Baptist (p18). Nor is it certain that the reason for the death of Paul not being recorded in Acts is that Luke completed his work while Paul was still in prison. But if Rist is right and Acts was written before Paul's execution, then some form of the Gospel of Luke would almost certainly be a good deal earlier than Rist's date of "not much later than 64" (p5). It is difficult to see why Rist should mention as a possibility (p50) that the variant in the parable of the wicked husbandmen which, in Matthew and Luke, makes the casting out of the son from the vineyard precede his killing, should be an older version of the story than that in Mark where the killing precedes the casting out. It seems much more likely that Matthew's variant is a correction of that found in Mark, designed to make the story fit more nearly the circumstances of Jesus' death outside Jerusalem. Again, the often advanced suggestion that in "the abomination of desolation" reference Matthew has corrected the masculine participle of Mark to a neuter participle is certainly simpler, and perhaps better, than Rist's suggestion of two written traditions pre-dating Mark and Matthew (p82).

We are less confident than Rist that Mark could not have intended his Gospel to end at 16.8, but we agree that there is no awkwardness in Matthew's continuation after the departure of the women from the tomb, as might have been expected if Matthew had been following Mark and had found that his source deserted him at this point.

One is not sure that Rist's claim that the words of Jesus would be preserved as accurately as possible adequately accounts for the remarkable closeness of sayings in a language which is not that in which they were originally spoken.

One would have welcomed a consideration of such passages as Mark 1.29-34 and parallels, where the order of events is identical in all the synoptics, even though the passage does not fall within the section where an

ordered sequence is to be expected, and where it looks as though Matthew and Luke have independently drawn their accounts from a written source similar to, if not identical with Mark.

On p93 we are informed, "For these two possibilities three alternative explanations seem to be available" . There may be three explanations but there can be only two alternatives!

In an appendix to the volume there is a useful criticism of M.D.Goulder's presentation of the case for Markan priority.

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V.Parkin

James P.Mackey: Jesus, the Man and the Myth
A Contemporary Theology
SCM 1979 pp310 £4.95

This is the most recent publication of Professor Mackey who has just been appointed Professor of Christian Dogmatics in the University of Edinburgh in succession to Professor T.F.Torrance.

The title of the book is carefully chosen: "Jesus, the Man and the Myth ", not "Jesus, the Man or the Myth". For Professor Mackey, "myth" has no pejorative meaning. It is rather an imaginative picture, which alone adequately describes the most profound experiences of life. Jesus, the "Man", can only be adequately described in a "myth" which vividly interprets what he does for man. Above all, "Son of God" and "Word of God" are the most effective myths. It is only possible to declare men's ultimate hopes and convictions by using such concrete human images. Jesus himself is seen therefore as developing such a myth in his use of the picture of "the kingdom of God" . And similarly other myths developed around him to make clear who he is and what he does.

What then according to Dr Mackey is the profound truth about life which Jesus brought and which men continue to find through him and in him? It is the knowledge that all we have in life is of grace. Our life is given to us by

God as the ultimate power behind things. It is given us to share with others, treating everyone as a real person, whom we are to serve. So we are called to live as children of a gracious Father and in obedience to Him we may have to subject ourselves to renunciation of selfish desires and suffer through the selfish desires of others. Such, above all, is the life which Jesus calls us to live and which He Himself supremely exemplifies. Inspired by His Spirit with us we are freed from the evil forces in our nature and justified or made righteous before God.

This according to Professor Mackey is what Jesus taught through His parables and the Lord's prayer, through the table fellowship He established and through His acts of healing. These at least are historically reliable facts. His Gospel is the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. It is attained, however, not simply by imitating Jesus but by living in the Church under the influence of His Spirit. He is life-giving Spirit and the N.T. accounts of the Resurrection are chiefly concerned with establishing the present power of the Spirit in the church. The Resurrection is thus itself a 'myth' standing for Jesus as life-giving spirit (Page 98). Doubtless this does involve belief that Jesus survived death but this is not the primary thing (Pages 120, 190, 194). All that St. Paul and the later Church say; His Sonship and His Lordship really are myths to convey the conviction that He reveals the nature of the gracious God. This is also the truth behind the church's use of terms like 'of one substance with the Father'. Through Jesus we meet with God. When it ceases to be myth and becomes a set of literal propositions, the doctrine tends to deny His real humanity. For the revealer is supremely Himself the Man of faith (Page 193, 238) who present in Spirit in the church evokes a similar faith in us.

We can thus see behind Professor Mackey the shadow not of Trent but of Schleiermacher. For both, Christian experience mediated through Jesus is the supreme thing. While Schleiermacher remained ambiguous about whether the presence of God in Jesus made Him essentially different from us, this ambiguity does not appear in Professor Mackey's exposition. He will use no metaphysical terms. All that

St. Paul and the Christian tradition have said about Jesus being behind Creation and being the eternal Son of God are simply myths for His revealing the mind of God. Again the titles attributed to Him in the Gospels - Messiah, Son of Man - are pictures but pictures not used by Jesus Himself, as they smack too much of the authoritarian attitude, which Jesus Himself renounced. Thus Professor Mackey finds little place for the 'authority' of Jesus' words and acts. He equally finds a very small place (e.g. p.261) for the concept of expiation offered by Jesus, though Jesus' words and acts and above all His death at the hands of self-centered men do lead us to repentance.

Such a Christology belongs to a liberal tradition which desires to hold on to the historical as far as possible and build a theological interpretation on it. How far the author succeeds will be for the reader to determine. There will be appreciation for Professor Mackey's interesting critique of the older 'Jesus of History' school (Chapter One) and of his no less trenchant criticism of the interpretation offered by Rudolf Bultmann (P.251ff). To some, however, he will appear to fall under the dictum made of certain philosophers that he is right in what he affirms but wrong in what he denies.

Belfast

J.L.M.Haire

John Thompson: Christological Perspectives in the Theology of Karl Barth

Edinburgh, St. Andrew Press 1978
pp.viii + 202 £3.95

In the summer of 1972, when I was studying in Tübingen, I used to meet in the theological seminar building a Belfast minister busily engaged in research for a Ph.D. on Karl Barth. These were my first encounters with John Thompson. A few years later I had the pleasure of publishing a part of his dissertation as an article in The Scottish Journal of Theology. Now he is Professor of

Systematic Theology in Union College and this shortened version of the entire dissertation has been made available. It is very welcome, for while there is already an immense literature on Barth, I know of no other book which does exactly the job which Professor Thompson has here set himself - and carried through with economy and precision.

What he has done is simply to trace out the ways in which Barth's theology, especially as unfolded in the many volumes of the Church Dogmatics, sets Jesus Christ in the centre and so opens up a range of vistas, of 'perspectives' which reveal different facets of his significance. This is of course the key to Barth's thought - which is better not called his 'system'; for what von Balthasar has aptly labelled Barth's 'christological concentration' is not so much a system as a method - but while the fact is widely recognised, there is not to hand any other such succinct exposition of Barth's application of it as this book provides. Professor Thompson's aim has been to distil and present the basic shape of Barth's approach by summary and quotation, so allowing Barth himself to be heard. That may, at first sight, seem an easy task. In fact, to do justice to a theology as rich and complex as Barth's, and to clarify his main concerns and arguments as successfully as this book does, demands a deal of discipline, patience and care. Those are amply evidenced throughout the text - to say nothing of something approaching a thousand footnote references. These are especially valuable for the information they offer, not only on Barth himself, but on interpretations and criticisms of him by others - among them, Berkouwer, Friedmann, Hartwell, Jüngel, Klappert, Kreck, Moltmann, O'Grady, Pannenberg, Parker, Torrance and Weber. In this way the reader is helpfully introduced to at least some of the issues in the debates generated by Barth's work, and also armed against some common misinterpretations of him.

The book falls into ten chapters; apart from the opening one, 'Christological Perspectives', which serves to introduce the matter and method of the study, each deals concisely with one main aspect of Barth's christology - e.g. 'The Incarnation' (2); 'Jesus Christ - the

Revelation of God' (3); 'Jesus Christ - the Reconciler' (4); 'Jesus Christ - the Atonement: Deity and Humanity in the Cross' (5); 'The Humanity of God' (8); 'Jesus Christ in Eschatological Perspective' (10). Inevitably, they offer essentially the bare bones of Barth's positions: it would be quite impossible in such a concentrated summary to convey very much of the symphonic dynamic of Barth's thirteen part-columns or of the vigour of his style. But I have already found them extremely useful both for reference when I wished to be reminded again of the broad shape of this or that element in Barth's presentation, and as assisting readers new to Barth in grasping his overall concerns and so finding a lead-in to the initially daunting Church Dogmatics. They are not easy or light reading, and they do make demands on the reader; but the effort of working through them is well worthwhile.

Professor Thompson does not engage in any very extended debate with Barth, for a reason he himself gives: 'the writer finds himself more in agreement with Barth than with his critics, and has himself only rarely and briefly entered a critical caveat. It is his belief that Karl Barth's contribution to this central theme and so to the whole of theology has been outstanding and is most relevant to the current debate on who Jesus really was and is.' (p.vii). There are of course those who would dissent violently from such an opinion; but as I do not happen to be among them, I shall not attempt to speak for them. Rather, I too share Professor Thompson's view of the matter. In the current discussion about Jesus - a discussion in which some of the running is being made by proponents of views so shallow that it is hard to credit the attention they are given - we badly need to draw on the rich and solid theological resources which men like Barth make available to us, and along the way to find again that theology is not mere playing about with ideas, nor trivial and self-conscious 'radicalism', but what Barth himself used to call a 'free, critical and happy' exploration of the reality of God opened up to us in the incarnate Word, whose name is Jesus Christ. My one critical observation concerning the book is that I should have liked a little more space to have been given

to this side of Barth - and to his joyful conception of the task of theology itself, to his insistence that good theology can only grow out of astonishment and wonder at the grace and glory of the Gospel, to the vitality and the humour of his zestful engagement in the enquiry and in confrontation with his critics, to the mischievous twinkle with which he could say that he would refrain from assaulting them provided they abstained from rude remarks about Mozart, to his repeated insistence that he at any rate was not a Barthian. These qualities are integral to his whole approach to theology and must, I feel, be taken into account if one is fully to appreciate the drive and intention of the complex architectonic of the Dogmatics, and to follow his writing in something of the writer's own spirit - a necessary aid to real understanding. But this regret has only to do with the omission of what would have been a further bonus over and above the very real value of Professor Thompson's study. It deserves to be widely used and warmly commended.

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Alasdair Heron

Jean Vanier:

Community and Growth

Darton, Longman & Todd 1979

pp248 £3.40

The author has come to be well-known in Ireland, especially through such centres as Corrymeela and Glencree. He springs from Canada and France with some of his education in England, but writes mainly of fourteen years of wide and deep experience of the community he founded at L'Arche in France from which similar communities have spawned into some eight countries. There is one at Kil-moganny, Co. Kilkenny.

The clue to his work lies in his aim in starting the first community as a family, a community with and for those who are weak and poor because of a mental handicap and who felt abandoned. "Everything I say about life in community", he declares, "in these pages is inspired by my

faith in Jesus". The book tries to clarify the conditions which are necessary to life in community and to the growth of persons in the fullest sense through their part in the community.

While this is not a rulebook on how to form and maintain communities nor a classbook on human growth, it certainly should make inspired reading for leaders and members and would throw much light on the functioning of groups of any kind, especially in church circles. It may be commended as a bedside book or aid to devotion, to be dipped into for ten pages at a time. In any one of such segments many rich nuggets are to be found, for deep and sustained meditation.

Vanier turns easily and compulsively to the Bible on the one hand, and to all kinds of human emotions and relationships on the other, interweaving the two in ways which any preacher may copy and quote. Challenge and rebuke are here, and so are encouragement and reassurance. The atmosphere is fresh with the freedom of Jesus Christ, yet there is no cheap grace or lyricizing.

In the first half of the book Vanier spells out what is meant by "Community", "Covenant/ Commitment" of members, and "Growth". "When I use the word 'Community'... I am talking essentially of groupings of people who have left their own milieu to live with others under the same roof, and work from a new vision of human beings and their relationships with each other and with God". This is a restricted meaning of community and what he says is constantly breaking out of the fences he has thus erected around his subject. Any of us, in family, at work, in school or college, or other group, will see ourselves mirrored, and our fellow-workers or members illuminated, as we read and ponder and relate to our own situation.

"Growth" is the journey towards a more realistic and truer love; it is a journey towards wholeness. This growth is "set between two frailties - the weakness of the tiny child and that of the person who is dying".

The second half of the book applies and illustrates these basic themes of which the foundations are soundly laid in the first half: there is nourishment or "daily bread" found, like manna, in grace, wonder, laughter, rest and relaxation. "Two dangers lie in wait for members of a community. Either they build a protective wall for

themselves - in the name of their union with God, their health or their private life - or they throw themselves helter-skelter into meetings, spilling all their emotions in the name of dialogue and sharing"; there are gifts to be recognized and encouraged; each person has a personal contribution to the whole in the same way as a member of an orchestra or the variety of plants in a well-ordered garden; it may be the gift of authority recognized and developed in leadership, or of shepherding, serving in the steps of the Good Shepherd and Servant Lord; there must be a welcome or acceptance of the most vulnerable in our complex society, the "marginal people", the "abandoned ones", the "poor"; every day is to be lived for itself - not looking towards some future time when all problems will be behind the community and "peace" has come; spirituality is patient dealing with routine and the ordinary, whether in events or people; celebration is the central activity of the true community, together with forgiveness - the twin beats of the heart; Vanier calls these "the two faces of love".

His book follows the style of the gospels by being full of paradoxes and aphorisms. "Growth begins when we start to accept our own weakness". "Communities start in mystery but may end in bureaucracy". "To love people is to recognize their gift and help them to use it". "Women tend to be rivals in love, men in power".

In our times, when there is so much exaltation of individualism and technological advance, this is the right sort of tonic for the soul of a community or of its members or leaders.

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J.R.Boyd



Contributors

Contributions are welcome, preferably in English and should be typed.

It would be helpful if contributors could make use of an electric typewriter and type within the area indicated in any sample full page of the Journal. Worn ribbons produce a poor result in being photographed for lithographic plates. Carbon ribbons in typewriters of the Golf Ball type generally produce excellent results. 'Note' presentation should conform to that presented in the Journal.

All contributions should be sent direct to the Editor, at Union Theological College
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